

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 197976

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652:GDS

SUBJECT: DETERIORATION OF ROK/JAPANESE RELATIONS

REF: A. STATE 196865

B. SEOUL 5883

1. HABIB CALLED IN ROK AMBASSADOR HAHM SEPTEMBER 9 TO CONVEY OUR UNDERSTANDING OF GOJ ATTITUDE (REF A) IN FURTHER EFFORT TO HELP COOL DOWN BILATERAL SITUATION. HE EXPLAINED TAT PURPOSE OF MEETING WAS TO ASSURE THAT KOREANS UNDERSTOOD WHAT JAPANESE ARE TELLING US, AND SAID THAT IN ATTEMPT TO BE EVEN-HANDED HE WOULD BE HOLDING SIMILAR MEETING WITH GOJ AMBASSADOR LATER THAT DAY. HABIB FIRST EMPHASIZED THAT IN RESPONSE TO OUR EXPRESSION OF CONCERN, JAPANESE HAD ASSURED US THAT FONMIN KIMURA'S RECENT STATEMENTS ON KOREA DID NOT REPRESENT CHANGE IN GOJ POLICY. HE URGED THAT KOREANS REMEMBER KIMURA'S REMARKS ARE RESPONSE TO OFTEN HOSTILE QUESTIONS AND THAT SOME OF JAPANESE PRESS SLANT THEM FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT.

2. HABIB THEN TURNED TO EFFECT OF SEPTEMBER 6 SACKING OF
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GOJ EMBASSY AND ENSUING DEMONSTRATIONS. HE COMMENDED PROMPT ROKG APOLOGY AND OFFER OF COMPENSATION AND SAID HE HAD URGED JAPANESE TO TAKE SIMILAR NOTICE. HOWEVER, KOREANS SHOULD BE AWARE THAT SERIOUSNESS OF EMBASSY INCIDENT IS BOUND TO HAVE STRONG NEGATIVE INFLUENCE ON RESPONSE THAT GOJ CAN MAKE TO PRESIDENT PARK'S DEMANDS; IN PARTICULAR, GOJ NOW CLAIMING IT IMPOSSIBLE TO SEND LETTER BY EMISSARY AS KOREANS ARE DEMANDING. HE SAID THAT, ALTHOUGH WE HAD NOT SEEN IT, WE UNDERSTOOD LETTER FROM TANAKA SHOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO ROKG. HE ACKNOWLEDGED IT WOULD NOT GO TO THE LENGTHS PROPOSED IN THE DRAFT STATEMENT SUGGESTED BY FONMIN KIM (REF B), BUT SPECULATED THAT EVEN ROKG WOULD ADMIT GOJ COULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO GO THAT FAR.

3. AMBASSADOR HAHM AND MINISTER PAK KUN ARGUED THAT FOR KOREAN PEOPLE, FORM NOW MORE IMPORTANT THAN SUBSTANCE. IF RESPONSE IS ROUTINE LETTER TO PRIMIN DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR USHIROKU RATHER THAN BY SPECIAL EMISSARY IT WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE. THEY WERE UNDER INSTRUCTION TO ASK USG TO CALL IN JAPANESE AND EXPRESS KOREAN CONCERN THAT RESPONSE MUST BE HANDLED IN THIS MANNER.

4. HABIB SAID HE WOULD CONVEY HAHM'S EXPRESSED CONCERN JUST AS HE WAS CONVEYING TO HAHM THE SERIOUS EFFECT OF THE EMBASSY SACKING ON THE GOJ. HE URGED, HOWEVER, THAT THE LETTER COULD PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR COOLING DOWN AND THAT IT COULD SERVE TO BEGIN THE RESTORATION OF A

PROPER DIALOGUE DESIRED BY ALL. HE WARNED THAT IF KOREANS REJECT RESPONSE, SITUATION COULD WORSEN TO BENEFIT OF NO ONE BUT NORTH KOREANS. KOREANS MUST PUT ASIDE TALK ABOUT RECALL OF AMBASSADOR AND BREAK IN RELATIONS AND BEGIN PROCESS OF WORKING TOGETHER AGAIN. THE TWO COUNTRIES MUST ACT TO END PRESENT PERIOD OF ESCALATION.

5. HABIB URGED THAT ROKG REFRAIN FROM IMPOSING TIME LIMIT ON RESPONSE BY TANAKA, AND CONCENTRATE INSTEAD OF FACING AND RESOLVING PROBLEM. IN MEANWHILE, ROK SHOULD SEEK TO LIMIT EFFECTS OF DEMONSTRATIONS WHILE AWAITING RESPONSE. WE WILL CONTINUE TO TRY TO KEEP TWO SIDES ACCURATELY CONFIDENTIAL

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INFORMED OF EACH OTHER'S POSITION. KISSINGER

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** LIMDIS

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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